



April 7, 2006

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM MOROCCO

### *Slum Upgrading in Nouaceur : A Time for Dialogue*

USAID/Morocco's **Local Governance Project** (LGP) provided support to the Nouaceur district in organizing, March 18, 2006, a "Dialogue and Information Day" in the slum neighborhood of *Ennakhil*. This event was to help resolve conflicts between the population and local authorities regarding the implementation of the slum upgrading and relocation, a first step in a process aimed at involving the population in the upgrading process.

USAID partners *Holding Al Omrane*, a public developer, *Chaabi Lillskane*, a private developer, and *Al Amana*, the leading Moroccan micro-credit association participated, along with an estimated 700 residents. Many of the slum residents expressed, some with bitterness, that it was the first time their opinion seemed to matter. A local woman spoke for many when she said that "I have been living here for thirty years, I have lost my teeth and my sight in this wretched place, the authorities never came to our help before, and before today, nobody ever asked for my opinion."

The event also helped local authorities better understand the importance of citizen involvement in local development. An official from the district reported: "I think I have learned something interesting today; one needs to know how to listen to people and think with them. I know it always takes a lot of time, but this must become a routine exercise so for us to know if we are going in the right direction."

The focus will now turn to developing a "**Local Plan for Social Action**" to assist the slum residents in the transition to their new neighborhood. This plan will focus on helping *Ennakhil* residents afford their new housing units by facilitating access to micro-finance and enhancing income generating opportunities. The LGP will co-finance selected community-driven small projects through its **Local Citizens Initiatives** grants program.



Women's forum at *Ennakhil*, a slum neighborhood south of Casablanca. (Photo USAID)

### *Court Management of Bankruptcy Cases Improves Business Environment*

In late March 2006, twelve judges and fifteen clerks of the **Commercial Court** of Rabat completed a fifteen day course on accounting principles for management of bankruptcy cases, offered by USAID's Project to **Improve the Business Climate in Morocco**. The USAID program was aimed at improving the competency of the Moroccan judiciary to dispatch company insolvency and reorganization cases. The subject matter focused on the analysis and critique of accounting evidence submitted by debtors and creditors in the context of bankruptcy court proceedings. Court personnel were trained in the details of financial balance sheets, and banking and accounting principles that bear on the rights of debtors and creditors in typical commercial court insolvency case. The training program included classroom theory as well as on-the-job training in the handling of actual pending cases under the guidance of a USAID expert. This session is the first in a series that USAID intends to offer to other jurisdictions throughout the year.

---

## Eye on Morocco



### ***National Consultation on Morocco's Proposal to the MCA***

Last week, the Moroccan government organized a two-day national workshop in Ouarzazate to discuss and improve Morocco's proposal to the Millennium Challenge Account. About 500 participants attended, representing civil society, local elected officials and business associations from all over the country. "Everyone for a Stronger Morocco" was the motto of the event, opened by Prime Minister Driss Jettou.

Morocco initially submitted a compact proposal to the MCC that included three components and a funding request of about \$750 million over five years:

- Improvement of agricultural productivity through the promotion of tree planting to replace cereals, development of sheep and goat breeding, small and medium water projects;
- Oases safeguard through water infrastructure, environmental protection, roads, and health services;
- Support to INDH, the government's major initiative to address social gaps, including girls' school enrollment, illiteracy, basic healthcare, rural electrification, potable water and local governance.

In opening the discussion, chairman Ahmed Ghazali paid tribute to USAID for funding the first study on civil society development in Morocco, and for sponsoring the first national NGO conference in 1996. USAID was also credited for pioneering microcredit in Morocco in 1993 and for its work for promoting the sector.

At the end of the workshop, several new components were proposed to address gaps that were seen by the participants in the government's initial proposal, pertaining to the handicraft industry, traditional fishing, self-employment and micro-credit. All participants felt the event was a very positive experience, an exercise of good governance and direct democracy. Through this first consultation, future MCA program beneficiaries were made part of the decision-making process. Several meetings with business associations, NGOs and locally elected officials were held during the following week, to discuss in greater detail the newly proposed areas, prior to the submission by the GOM of an updated proposal to the MCC by April 15, 2006.

---

## The MEPI Corner



### ***Civitas Promotes Youth Citizenship***

The Moroccan Center for Civic Education (local branch of **Arab Civitas**), whose mission is to promote civic education and educate younger generations to be responsible, effective and active citizens, has been conducting workshops using the *Project Citizen* curriculum and organizing seminars and conferences on civic education all over Morocco. During January, February and March 2006, more than 10,000 middle school students from a number of regions have been working to identify community problems, research them, including public policy and regulatory environment, evaluate solutions, develop their own solutions and create action plans. The groups are now working on developing a portfolio of their projects which they will present in May 2006 before a panel of regional and national judges and community members.

---

## April 2006 Events



- ❑ Livestock regional technical working group in Oriental region
- ❑ Planning, achieving and learning training
- ❑ First session of the National training for judges and magistrates
- ❑ Workshop on apparel and textile exports to the U.S.
- ❑ Opening of the multimedia center at the Ministry of Agriculture
- ❑ International agriculture/agribusiness forum